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ABSTRACT

A recent interest in the organizational literature has been to identify the circumstances under which people exercise upward influence in order to achieve individual and organizational goals. To examine the circumstances under which administrators in a variety of firms exercised upward influence, i.e., influence on their superiors, to achieve individual and organizational goals, 113 managers completed a questionnaire. Managers who exercised upward influence to achieve organizational goals were self-confident, directed non-routinized work units, and had power in their organizations. Staff managers exercised upward influence to achieve individual goals more often than line managers. Influence strategies used by managers varied as a function of outcomes sought from their superiors. The findings suggest that the manager's pursuit of individual and organizational goals is not mutually exclusive and that influence is exercised far more frequently for organizational than individual reasons. (Author/JAC)

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MANAGERS' PURSUIT OF INDIVIDUAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL GOALS

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PRESENTATION SUMMARY

MANAGERS' PURSUIT OF INDIVIDUAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL GOALS

A recent interest in the organizational literature has been to identify the circumstances under which people exercise upward influence in order to achieve individual and organizational goals (Madison et al., 1980; Mowday, 1979; Porter et al., 1981; and Schein, 1977). This study seeks to answer four questions related to this topic. First, "How frequently do managers seek to achieve individual goals versus organizational goals?" Second, "Is the frequency of seeking individual goals positively or negatively related to the frequency of seeking organizational goals?" Third, "What personal and organizational characteristics are related to the frequency of seeking individual and organizational goals?" Fourth, "What influence strategies are used by managers to achieve their individual and organizational goals?"

METHOD

Data for this study were collected from 113 managers employed in a variety of firms. Of the respondents, 84 percent were first line supervisors and 16 percent were middle managers. Twenty-four percent of the respondents were female and 76 percent male. The managers had been employed in their current positions for an average of 3.6 years. All respondents completed a questionnaire describing the frequency with which they tried to influence their superiors for both individual and organizational reasons, the influence tactics they used with their superiors, and personal and organizational background information.

The questionnaire measured the following:

Goals. Based upon a previous study of managerial goals (Kipnis, Schmidt and Wilkinson, 1980), respondents were given six possible goals that they might have sought from their superiors. Three measured individual goals: a) convince my superior to give me benefits, such as more pay, better hours of work, bett\ job assignments, and so on; b) convince my superior to assist me or do some of my work: c) convince my superior to evaluate my work favorably, respect, and think well of me. The next three goals measured organizational reasons for influencing superiors: d) convince my superior to accept my ideas for change, for example, a new work project, a new program, or a better way of doing the work; e) assign work to my superior, or tell my superior what to do; f) convince my superior to do his or her own work better or do the work as required. For each of the six goals, respondents were asked to rate on a 5-point scale ranging from "Never" (1) to "Very Often"(5) how frequently each goal had been the cause of their trying to influence their immediate superior.

Influence Strategies. The Kipnis-Schmidt Managerial Influence Profile (Kipnis et al., 1980) contains 26 items which measure the following six influence strategies: Ingratiation (alpha = .76); Exchange of Benefits (alpha = .60); Rational (alpha = .82); Assertiveness (alpha = .67); Appeal Up (alpha = .53); and Coalitions (alpha = .73). Respondents were asked to indicate on a five-point scale how frequently they used the listed tactics to influence their immediate superior during the last six months.

Personal and Organizational Background Variables. Sex of Respondent; Job Tenure (number of years that the respondent has been working in current position); Line versus Staff (respondents indicated whether they were in a

line or staff position); and Span of Control (number of subordinates supervised).

In addition respondents completed the following scales: Self-Confidence in Management Abilities (alpha = .79); Evaluation of Superior (alpha = .82); Perceived Power in the Organization (alpha = .79); Perceived Power Over Subordinates (alpha = .74); Routinization of Work Done in the Manager's Unit (alpha = .77). The items comprising each of the above scales will be given at the APA presentation.

RESULTS

Frequency of Seeking Individual and Organizational Goals

The frequency with which managers reported they influence their superiors for each of six reasons is shown in Table 1. Managers most frequently tried to influence their superiors to accept ideas for changing or improving organizational performance. Similar findings were reported in several previous studies among managers (Schmidt and Kipnis, 1981; Kipnis et al., 1980), suggesting that upward influence among managers is most likely to occur in order to satisfy organizational rather than individual goals.

Table 1 about here

Relationship Between Individual and Organizational Goals

Table 1 also shows that there were low positive correlations between all six goals ranging from r = .15 to r = .34. All but two of the 15 correlations were significant ($p \leq .05$). This pattern of correlations can be interpreted to mean that managers who attempted to influence their superiors for organizational reasons also tended to influence for individual reasons.

Personal and Organizational Correlates of Goals

Table 2 shows the personal and organizational variables that significantly correlated ($p \leq .05$) with seeking individual and organizational goals. In the present study only the variables of manager's gender, years of experience, and whether a union represented the manager's subordinates were not significantly correlated with any of the six goals.

Table 2 about here

A set of step-wise regression analyses were performed to examine the relative contribution of the personal and organizational variables listed in Table 2 to the prediction of each goal. Only those variables that correlated significantly ($p \leq .05$) with a goal were entered into a regression model. Table 3 shows the combination of variables that best predicted each goal with the variables listed in order of relative importance to the prediction. Additionally, Table 3 shows the multiple correlation of the selected variables with each goal.

Table 3 about here

A. Organizational Goals. Table 3 shows that managers who frequently attempted to influence their superiors to accept ideas were characterized as directing work units that specialized in non-routinized work, were self-confident about their ability to work with higher management, and described themselves as having influence in their organizations. Two of these three variables (directing non-routine activities and self-confidence) were also predictive of the frequency with which managers suggested activities that their superiors might carry out.

The frequency with which managers attempted to improve their superiors' performance however was only related to the nature of the relationship with their superiors. The more negatively a manager evaluated his or her superior, the more frequently the manager attempted to improve the superior's performance.

B. Individual Goals. Staff managers more often reported that they exercised upward influence to obtain individual goals than did line managers. Similar findings were reported by Madison et al. (1980), suggesting a general orientation of staff managers toward maximizing their self-interest.

Managers who were concerned with impression-management and frequently sought to improve their self-images with their superiors, described themselves as having little influence over the performance of their subordinates. Schlenker (1980) has suggested a link between powerlessness and impression management behavior which the present correlation may reflect.

Strategies Used to Pursue Individual and Organizational Goals

Table 2 (lower half) reports the correlations between goals sought and the use of the six influence strategies. Table 4 reports the stepwise regression analyses of the strategies which correlated significantly ($p \leq .05$) with each of the six goals.

Table 4 about here

Different combinations of strategies were used with each of the three organizational goals. Managers who sought to sell their ideas to superiors relied on the use of rational and coalition strategies. Those attempting to improve their superiors' job performance used a combination of strategies involving ingratiation and assertiveness. Finally, managers suggesting work that their superiors should do relied upon appeals to higher management and coalitions.

Obtaining individual goals was associated with a somewhat different set of influence strategies. Managers seeking personal benefits from their superiors used coalitions and exchange strategies. Impression management was accomplished with the use of ingratiation, avoidance of appeals to higher management, and assertiveness. Finally, managers who wanted help with their work used assertiveness and coalitions.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the present study indicated that the managers' pursuit of individual and organizational goals are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, managers seeking one set of goals also sought the second set.

Another finding is that influence is exercised far more frequently for organizational than individual reasons. Managers seeking to influence for organizational reasons were characterized as directing non-routinized work units and expressing confidence in their own abilities to exercise influence in their organizations. These variables can be readily recognized from previous studies of organizational power. That is, the routinization of work (Rousseau, 1978; Hickson et al., 1969); and self-confidence (Mowday, 1979) have been linked in previous studies to the use of power in organizations. The results of this study contribute to this literature by finding a direct link between these variables and the frequency with which managers attempted to exercise upward influence to pursue organizational goals.

Perhaps the most interesting finding was that staff managers were more likely than line managers to report that they tried to influence their superiors to provide them with benefits, to think well of them, and to assist them in their own work. Madison et al. (1980) have also reported a greater incidence of self-interest behavior among staff managers, suggesting this is

a general finding. However, there appear several competing explanations for this finding.

Porter et al. (1981) suggest that frequent attempts by staff managers to obtain individual goals reflects their power in their organizations. This power arises from the fact that staff managers direct units which are more important to an organization for coping with uncertainty. Hence staff managers can demand more benefits for themselves, since they are worth more to an organization. This explanation, however, is not consistent with the findings of the present study which did not find measures of power and uncertainty (routinization) associated with seeking individual goals. Rather these measures were associated with seeking organizational goals.

One possible alternate explanation is that staff managers are more personally ambitious than line managers. As a result they make more attempts to pursue individual goals. Another alternate explanation is that staff managers spend more time with their superiors and hence have more opportunities to seek individual goals. Unfortunately, the present data do not support one or the other of these several explanations. Clearly additional research is needed to clarify the basis for these findings.

A final finding of interest was that managerial choice of influence strategies was guided in large part by the kinds of outcomes sought from superiors. Similar findings have been reported in previous research (Kipnis et al., 1980; Schmidt and Kipnis, 1981). Managers used ingratiation, for instance, when seeking to improve their image with their superiors, but used rational strategies when seeking to influence their superiors about ideas. This pattern supports the assertion of Raven (1974, p. 192) that "to the extent man is rational, we would expect him to use (the influence strategies) which would most likely lead to successful influence."

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Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations of Goals Sought From Immediate Superior

GOALS	Mean	S.D.	GOALS: Assist with own job	Improve own image	Assign work	Improve performnce	Sell ideas
INDIVIDUAL							
Obtain personal benefits	1.62	.86	.15	.34	.23	.20	.17
Assist with own job	1.68	.82		.21	.26	.28	.20
Improve own image	1.90	1.20			.25	.25	.29
ORGANIZATIONAL							
Assign work	1.87	.90				.23	.29
Improve performance	1.40	.77					.15
Sell ideas	3.11	1.06					

N = 98 $r = .17$; $p \leq .05$

Table 2

Correlates of Individual and Organizational Goals

	GOALS					
	INDIVIDUAL			ORGANIZATIONAL		
	Obtain personal benefits	Assist with own job	Improve image	Assign work	Improve Performance	Sell ideas
ROUTINIZATION OF WORK	.01	-.02	.08	.26**	-.02	.21*
ORGANIZATIONAL						
Line(1)/staff(2)	.19*	.22**	.23**	-.07	.08	.02
Number subordinates	-.20*	.08	-.09	-.11	-.11	-.08
Power in organization	.05	.25**	.10	.18*	.11	.28**
Power over subordinates	-.11	-.02	-.19*	-.04	-.10	.09
PERSONAL						
Self-assessment	-.04	.03	.03	.18*	-.05	.36**
Evaluation of superior	-.21*	-.11	-.15	-.09	-.31**	.09
INFLUENCE STRATEGY						
Ingratiation	.21*	.25**	.48**	.16	.33**	.28**
Assertiveness	.16	.38**	.26**	.28**	.33**	.09
Exchange	.31**	.25**	.36**	.27**	.24**	.15
Rational	.21*	.18*	.27**	.23**	.15	.49**
Appeal up	.15	.33**	.17*	.32**	.27**	.17*
Coalition	.32**	.33**	.17*	.28**	.08	.37**

N = 98

**p ≤ .01

*p ≤ .05

Table 3

Organizational and Personal Factors Associated with Individual and Organizational Goals

GOALS	FACTOR	b′	R
INDIVIDUAL			
Obtain personal benefits	Evaluation of superior	-.16	
	Number subordinates	-.14	
	Line/staff	.14	.30°
Assist with own job	Power in organization	.20	
	Line/staff	.16	.29*
Improve own image	Line/staff	.21	
	Power over subordinates	-.16	.28*
ORGANIZATIONAL			
Assign work	Routinization	.25*	
	Self-assessment	.16	.31*
Improve performance	Evaluation of superior	.31**	.31**
Sell ideas	Self-assessment	.30*	
	Routinization	.18	
	Power in organization	.11	.42**

N = 98

*p ≤ .05; **p ≤ .01

′Standardized regression coefficient

Table 4

Influence Strategies Used with Individual and Organizational Goals

GOALS	INFLUENCE STRATEGY	b[1]	R
INDIVIDUAL			
Obtain personal benefits	Coalition	.27**	
	Exchange	.22*	.37*
Assist with own job	Assertiveness	.32**	
	Coalition	.25*	.45**
Improve own image	Ingratiation	.47**	
	Assertiveness	.25*	
	Appeal up	-.11	.53**
ORGANIZATIONAL			
Assign work	Appeal up	.24*	
	Coalition	.18	.36**
Improve performance	Ingratiation	.28*	
	Assertiveness	.28*	.43**
Sell ideas	Rational	.40**	
	Coalition	.16	.51**

N = 98

*$p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$

[1]Standardized regression coefficient